

HBI150 Stakeholder Forum

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VCU Student Commons

Critical Questions for Discussion

*Breakout Session Flipchart Notes
Richmond Salon III*

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I. What should Virginia focus on?

- Need watershed based focus.
- He is a regulator so from his perspective there is a need to have a system of accountability and to ensure what is in place is enforced properly.
- Picking up on what Russ Baxter said, need to have an infrastructure to implement BMP programs at an enhanced county level with service delivery farm to farm and year to year
- He is not a technical person but recalled when a map was flashed up on the wall during the plenary session what he had learned from Governor Baliles' Blue Ribbon Finance Committee that we need to define the hot spots needing attention and ask if resources are being channeled to the right place.
- The Commonwealth has an image problem that enforcement action does not happen. Need to toughen up enforcement of agricultural BMPs and have stronger requirements for public funding of implementation.
- The education of local elected officials is an ongoing need because of turnover. Local governments have a tough situation with development – local taxation

structure is based on development but development is also a source of impairment. So need to give agriculture and forestry credit for what they do right.

- Need to identify what can be actually controlled and have an effect of water quality.
- Need to integrate components of delivery system, avoid conflicting guidance from various agencies so figure out how to improve management and delivery system and streamline process (example: the TMDL process is lengthy and resource intensive and need to work with federal representatives to determine how to streamline the process even with federal requirements to get what needs to get done.)
- Education for citizens with consistent funding and meaningful opportunities for citizen involvement; there are misconceptions so constantly need to go past that (ex. newspaper leaving out key words such as 67% of streams impaired vs. monitored).
- There has been a leadership void regarding the environment. Need for top leaders in the state to set direction and to focus on the value of natural resources. There caps for PS but not for NPS, but a combined cap of PS and NPS is important because linked by regulation.
- Is an outsider who moved to Richmond two years ago. He hears a lot from citizens about aquatic resources such as the Bay and the James River. Should recognize political capital of concern of Virginia citizens for aquatic resources and keep this concern for the environment in mind as it is quite valuable. However, senses there is discouragement that funding to date has not achieved improvements (example: perception of recent impaired waters list is that things are not getting better). Suggests that for prioritization of funding, need goals to document progress. Since it is easier to document progress on a small scale rather than on a large scale, suggests consider prioritization on how spend funds so target watersheds to get results, perhaps target as priority for NPS those watersheds with highest enrollment for BMPs that might have the highest implementation.
- Evaluate current roles, responsibilities and resources.
- Suggest take the take long view and siphon off funds in Washington for primary school education of environmental quality issues to prepare the next generation. Another way to prioritize is biggest bang for the buck.
- VA needs to focus on implementation. The public wants on the ground solutions, roll up sleeves and fix problems. VA should focus on large scale BMPs - what DCR calls baseline BMPs - to achieve trib strategies. Focus priorities on hot spots because do not have all the money needed.
- Better incentives of BMPs for farmers; look at available money and how appropriated and how best being spent/should be used.
- **Anonymous comments submitted on a card:** Better sharing of information among organizations, e.g. results of WQM to citizen groups and local governments. Training staffs of all organizations (stability varies) - technical, administrative, marketing. Improving analysis and management tools at all levels

and sharing data derived there from. Need to develop groups of experts (fiscal, technical, policy) to cover all contingencies

2. What should Virginia be doing for water quality protection and restoration that we are not doing? Likewise, what are we doing that we should not be doing because the practice isn't working or isn't producing the water quality improvements that are needed/desired?

- From local government perspective, the inaccuracies in the newspaper about impairments (spending money but no improvement) turns off the public off. The newspapers focus on the bad and we need to say what good has been accomplished.
- Required funding of public implementation plans.
- The role of public information is of critical importance to help citizens understand something so important as NPS and why funds are not put to it. We are all polluters and citizens do not think of themselves that way but rather that polluters are sewage treatment plant discharges; citizens do not understand the effect on water quality of daily things they do such as fertilizing the lawn. The question is how to get information out there to citizens on responsible behavior and getting the public to understand their individual contributions to pollution; define ways to get the message to public.
- Need to take actions to help the locality or conservation district understand that how you manage your farm to meet the local small cap or watershed limitations are good for our stream and for them to take the caps seriously in making decisions. In other words, need to make pollution limits personal/local:
- Need to be thinking about emerging pollutants and not just nitrogen and phosphorus.
- Sustainable development with respect to aquatic health.
- Set requirements that we can measure and achieve.
- Ensure water quality improvements are a priority with a consistent source of funds.
- Need to protect and save agricultural and forest lands rather than convert to concrete. If we put farmers out of business, may replace with worse water quality land uses such as golf course and houses. There is lots of f implementation money available. In VA it must be used for implementation while other states may have a more flexible administration of the funds with a strong education component but more effective combined with implementation. VA needs to be more flexible in this regard.
- There are levels of scale in educating local governments about PS & NPS approaches but they need to see how their decisions and these programs such as nutrient loading fit together in the landscape.
- Need to achieve consistency with soil erosion law. Not there yet, same with storm water – never regulated where it needs to and should be evaluated before start new program.
- Make sure existing infrastructure being used effectively and reach out to other groups to utilize; not maintaining sustainable environmental policy every 4 years.

- VDH approves small package STP on individual homeowners who for \$20K instead of a septic tank that does not work can construct a home. So developing property waterfront not previously able to develop. Is it consistent with state policy for WQ? Did VDH regs make it easier? Locality can prevent what state reg allows.
- 2 sides – need more WQ monitoring to assess success of NPS BMPs targeted and using citizen monitors more because DEQ can not cover; lot of decisions being made on models which are good predictive tool but not good for accessing results.
- Need to retain monitoring sites rather than monitor for a period of time and move the site. Need consistent monitoring to assess ongoing improvements; for example, inability to track improvements from use of no till farming due to explosion in fuel prices because moved station.
- It would be a good idea for VA government to implement a green roof BMP for storm water runoff control on a state building in downtown Richmond. It would be a great demo to implementing such practices.
- **Anonymous comments submitted on a card:** State needs to look at hiring retention and succession planning to be sure there is a work force to start/keep/sustain continuous water quality, improvement. The current quality of the work force will not be sustained given the organization design of the Natural Resources Secretariat. If the state workforce isn't the best it can be, then any initiative cannot survive.

3. What roadblocks exist that might inhibit or delay the successful implementation of our cleanup plan? How do you suggest we remove or mitigate the roadblock?

- Lack of communication and coordination of state agencies. For example, locality submits same data to more than one state agency. Can DEQ enforce TMDL for NPS and locality say how do it?
- Need more coordination state, local govt., private organizations; objectives may not be the same but if coordinate might all reach objectives.
- Find dedicated funding source.
- Has to be more effective communication at local government official level to get word out. Perhaps not structured that way now for it to work with state agencies. Ex. Issue is that finances for transportation could possibly be used for the environment. Water quality funds depend on surplus or how warm politician feels about the environment so need to find a dedicated funding source.
- Lack of specificity who is responsible for what; no one given road map with assignment of tasks and when get done. Needs to get personal so not vague thing called a plan.
- Can not tell who all of the players are; every body has got a piece of us; need consistency in state coordination of state policy so we all know what we are supposed to do.
- Multiple definitions of success, how measure success. Ex. model WQ achievement or other WQ improvements but move monitoring station. Train wreck in the future because too many measures and may have improved WQ

- but still check off impaired so need to get hard grip on how to define success & strategies to get there.
- Need buy-in by local government but such a disparity of NPS programs that lack of buy-in in terms of conservation preservation. Need education, VACo encouragement.
 - Inadequate education both formal and community based; lack of opportunity for participation and need to create incentives (tax credit for underwriting education program in a county).
 - Is same standard good for everything such as setting all waters fishable and swimmable so everything has same threat and need for protection so left with impression that are downgrading water uses/quality.
 - Ecological roadblocks such as changing food webs that impact resource management; legacy sediment impact SAV, James R. catfish come in and take over.
 - Commonwealth has to raise tax rates to fund.
 - Internal rules of state agencies, e.g. procurement at VDOT for roadside BMPS; full cost pricing vs. changing targets.
 - Inconsistent funding sources one of roadblocks. Also inadequate field staff. Suggest not continue to do way have done it and get new ideas to get past that problem such as more aggressive private/public partnership (citizen monitoring). Even when funding available reluctance for farmers to participate – should we give them a deadline (regulatory approach) and not just money (incentive approach) and grant greater tax credits for landowners who implement BMP and can you trade that or if get 100 % BMP coverage on local farm, can get property tax break.
 - Finances, how find way to pay for it.
 - **Anonymous comments submitted on a card:** To remove funding roadblock, is Dept. of Planning & Budget being used to the best advantage of the Commonwealth if growth, both economic and population, is a good thing for the Commonwealth, how does the environment and natural resources of Virginia get a share of the benefit of that growth?

4. How do we set reasonable and achievable time frames to accomplish the clean-up plan objectives?

- Remember one size does not fit all – urban and rural environment differ so tailor to environment working on.
- Agrees timeframes necessary and the lower they get in the program the better they are; to do this need information or rely on estimate to measure success/failure.
- Need to understand current infrastructure. Ex. Storm water BMP here is what we could do with X funding – need to look at delivery mechanisms and if satisfied with that level of delivery and take it from there.
- Clean up plans based on 2000 reduction goals. Not know how much local government has been involved in establishing how realistic those goals are;

ultimately falls on local government to design wastewater treatment plant and regulate on ground NPS pollution. Uncertain how much council taken of local govt taken so far. Are top state officials goals are they realistic and can we get situation at now with 6 years from 2010 goal which are not going to meet. Perhaps there have been steps taken that he is unaware of.

- Need dedicated funding.
- Agree, consistent long term policies agree to need long term dedicated funding. There have been a lot of educating governors but not many environmental governors.
- How can set or not set timelines on success. Not sure if can set reasonable attainable gain for NPS; if can figure out goal to achieve that realistic can get closer but in NPS area, dealing with a natural system so can not set arbitrary time frame and achieve success.
- Develop and maintain a planning base. Identify factors that will come to play. Set goals and what is realistic for put conservation on the ground. Second part – what do you do with that data – suggest look at how complex issues been handled in other arenas such as defense industry which has models and perhaps to tap into what other people have done – look at benchmarks.
- Watershed and river basin planning as basin; use local grassroots input to help with scheduling, not cookie cutter.
- Need to understand NPS things that are ongoing and take care of things for a long period of time. Instead, people don't think about this. People should look at economics driver such as no till with high gas costs because are the ones that are going to stick even if not best approach but need to look at this.
- Adaptive management planning, don't need timeframes but look at progress to know where want to get so monitor toward goals and accelerate areas if not moving fast enough to meet goals.
- Need to develop groups of experts
- Timelines mean deadlines to her, don't put things off, need to make sure that we have deadlines to plan, avoid vagueness.
- Need to develop greater consensus what defines success; who drives it – DEQ or local govt - and how relationship is going to work out.
- **Anonymous comments submitted on a card:** Why do we need timeframes – what performance measurement does timeframe satisfy. Measure and report on the outcome performance measure. Set a schedule, for consistent measurement, and use adaptive planning to move consistent improvement forward. Set deadlines/time frames based on data.